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MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.

CLOSE OF THE SESSION, JUNE, 1891.

ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS

BY

REV. CHARLES HARGROVE, M.A.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

BY

REV. JAMES DRUMMOND, LL.D.

A WELCOME TO THE MINISTRY

BY

REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

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ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS,

At the Close of the Session, June, 1891,

By the Rev. C. HARGROVE, M.A.

THE FACTS OF RELIGION.

On this, the first occasion, my dear Brothers and Fellow-workers, that I address you as a Visitor of this College, it is my duty, for a moment, to call your attention to my own person, and to express the surprise and satisfaction with which I received the news of my appointment to this honourable office; surprise that your Committee should have seen fit to pass over so many *alumni* of the College, known and approved through long years of study and of ministry, to elect one who was but a while ago a stranger to you all, to your faith and hopes; satisfaction, not unmingled with fear, lest I should prove myself not worthy the confidence and esteem which they, perhaps too generously, manifested towards me.

But if I were disposed to take such an honour lightly and merely as my due, I should be checked by remembering to whom it is that I am called to succeed,—one whose service in the cause has been life-long and altogether consistent; who as scholar, preacher, gentleman, has won for himself universal esteem; whom all who call themselves by the Unitarian name are unanimous to admire, and who has won the reverence and praise of many indifferent to our Theology; one who has no detractors, no enemies, none who can reproach him for inconstancy or change, or desertion of their cause. If it had been the object of the Committee, finding none equal to Dr. Sadler, to fall back upon a contrast, and choose one most unlike, they have certainly succeeded. I must needs fail of that authority which a blameless consistency of creed and conduct, and long years of

assiduous ministry, can alone confer; but let me trust, that the troublous and varied experiences of my own religious life may not be without profit for younger men, whose lot is cast in times which grow ever more troublous and perplexing with problems, new, and renewed, and popularised, and forced day by day upon our attention.

To meet all such problems fully, fearlessly, with perfect honesty, not regarding them as suggestions of the evil one which must be overcome by fight or flight, but as broken lights of truth which may help to further progress—this is the chief end of the training of this College. All Churches applaud the firm faith which no arguments can avail to shake; "honest doubt" has in these late years obtained for itself some small share of recognition as a quasi virtue; but there is a quality more exalted than either which, as yet, has scarcely been admitted as possible to human infirmity—it is honest faith, the faith in God, in virtue, in immortality, which is the result of free search after truth, and which even welcomes doubts and difficulties as steps to fuller revelation and further discovery. Happy will it be for you if, during your years of study here, you shall arrive at such a faith, a faith which will rest, not on early convictions, not on ministerial obligations, once undertaken, which you cannot lightly throw off, not on the *pis aller* that you must believe something, and this as good or better than most creeds, but on a conviction of reason that even so in fact it is.

But is such a conviction attainable, and can a free study of Theology furnish us with it? or must we look for some supernatural grace infused in Baptism, or at the time of our conversion, by the aid of which we rise above knowledge and reason to the clear discernment of Faith? Is there indeed a Science of Theology which can lead its votaries to sure and definite conclusions? Verily, it might seem not so, for, while other studies tend to the establishment of results admitted by all, the study of Theology does but perpetuate differences of opinion and aggravate the

intensity of opposition. In the other sciences delusions have their day, sometimes, indeed, a very long one; but, in the end, they are exposed and pass away. Controversies have their rise, their crises, their final settlement, and pass into history. In Theology only, nothing is ever settled; the same controversies occupy us from generation to generation, the same arguments are urged on either side, century after century. Names may change or may abide, but the substance of the dispute is the same. It is fourteen hundred years since Augustine and Pelagius contended concerning the grace of God and the corruption of human nature; it is nigh four hundred since Luther and Erasmus and Cajetan took various sides as regards the Church and its doctrine and its authority. Busily, learnedly, passionately have these controversies been carried on uninterruptedly even to our day; but we are no whit nearer yet to a general agreement on the one question or the other. The progress of the nineteenth century has helped nothing to solve the problems which agitated the minds of religious men in the fourteenth or the fourth. Is it any wonder that young students are turning away from such apparently fruitless pursuits, and engaging rather in the service of those sciences which repay their votaries with such grand results? Is it aught but "vanity and striving after wind," they ask, this learning again what has been again and again learnt in vain, this rehearsing of arguments which convince none but those who are already agreed?

But before coming to the sad conclusion that man can know nothing truly of what most concerns him, nothing of God, or of his own spiritual being, or of his higher destinies, we are bound to ask ourselves what the cause may be of this failure of Theology, and whether the fault be in our limited capacities, or in our perverted methods?

Nor can the answer be far to seek when we compare the theologian with the scientist, and Theology with other sciences. The scientist is but a man; he has his prejudices, his selfish

interests, his infirmities of mind and will, which warp his judgment and incline him to the side he takes. But the science which he follows has no such perversities; it has no preliminary condition of study, binding him one way or another. For two centuries astronomers argued whether the sun moved round the earth or the earth round the sun; the observations of a single generation would have settled the doubt, but for the trespass of the theologians on a field which was not of their domain. It has now been long agreed as to the fact, because astronomy is not Copernican, or Ptolemaic, or of any sect or school, and once freed from the restraint unwarrantably imposed upon it, has vindicated the truth and justified its martyrs. Again, Geologists disputed, at the beginning of this century, whether fire or water was the agent which determined the constitution of the globe, and, no doubt, on either side there was passion and prejudice; but that controversy, too, is concluded, and there is a general agreement as to the respective parts played by these mighty forces, an agreement which could never have been arrived at if geology had been Plutonic or Neptunic, and students and professors bound to maintain the system to which they had attached themselves. And innumerable instances might be given of the like kind. Science recognises no parties or opinions; it is his own study, if he be not hindered from outside, which will determine the conclusions at which the student arrives.

The theologian is encumbered with human infirmities as others; but, worse off than others, he is not or has not hitherto been free. His theology binds him; it determines beforehand the conclusion at which he is bound to arrive, it lays necessity upon him to refute the argument which he has not yet heard, or had time to consider. Must it needs be so always? Is it impossible to escape the momentum which carries us in a vicious circle, compelling us to return upon the premises with which we started? Is it in the nature of theological

study that it should be the proving of that which we believe beforehand rather than the honest investigation of what is to be believed?

The latest in point in time, the most insignificant in size among the places of study in this ancient and revered seat of learning, it is for Manchester New College, with all modesty and respect, to point out a better way, a path by whose faithful pursuit Theology may yet attain to results as firmly established as are those of any other science. Yours, not because you profess yourselves more clever or more learned than others here—such a claim in such a place were indeed a folly—but because you inherit a freedom which is not theirs, because you are bound by neither creeds, nor catechisms, nor trust deeds, pulled back in your investigations by no old-fashioned bit checking your onward course, and compelling you again on the old road.

The prince of theologians, a man than whom the world has not produced a keener intelligence, St. Thomas Aquinas, tells us that sciences are of two kinds; some whose principles are manifest by the natural light of reason, such as arithmetic, geometry, and such like; Theology is the other kind, whose principles are known by the higher light of revelation, and therefore it takes precedence of all other sciences, on account both of its greater certainty and dignity. So, taking the doctrine of the Mediæval Church as the principles of his science and the axioms of his reasoning, he arrived, after manifold argument, at the completest possible establishment and elucidation of that doctrine. It is not otherwise that theologians of the most opposite schools have set to work, nor have their achievements surpassed his, or been of more avail to persuade the world. The infallibility of the Bible, the authority of the creeds, the substantial correctness of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, or of the Assembly's Catechism, this or that doctrine or set of doctrines, have been assumed as fundamental principles, and amply and ably proved and developed—on the hypothesis of their truth. It

is yours to assume nothing, to distinguish at the outset of your studies between facts and assumptions, to make it your life work to discover the very facts on which any true science of Theology must rest, to have regard to them all, great and small, and to seek impartially to determine their significance. For facts are indeed divine revelations, though the interpretation of them, as of any revelation, must of necessity be human and fallible.

But what are facts? For our purpose, which is practical, and not a philosophical inquiry, we may say, that facts are such statements as are generally accepted by competent and unprejudiced men or as may be demonstrated to the satisfaction of those who are willing and capable to follow the links of demonstration.

I accept the odes of Horace as a work of the Augustan age, because I find that it is acknowledged to be such by all scholars; it is a fact for me, although it is true that I might not be able to reply to a clever paradoxer who maintained that they owed their origin to monks of the twelfth century.

Similarly, I have no doubt of the existence of two moons of Mars, which I never have seen, probably with my unpractised eyes am incapable of seeing. It is a fact for me, because I find that astronomers are satisfied with the evidence, and agreed to admit it.

Now are there not such facts to be collected on a firm basis for a new science of old Theology, no less sure than those upon which literary men or astronomers are agreed? Certainly Roman or Anglican or Evangelical or Unitarian doctrine are not such, inasmuch as upon these there is no kind of agreement. Yet we have a multitude of facts which are no less firmly ascertained, or which have to be further investigated, and with these lies our business, on these must the Theology of the future be established, if it is to abide and grow.

To begin with, we have the Facts of our Position, if I may so call them for want of a better name, facts which the Agnostic is prone to overlook, but which impress themselves with awful

significance on the reverent soul,—such as, first, that we are dwellers in a universe which we cannot conceive of as finite, and so with our very bodily eyes look out upon infinite space, and with mental vision contemplate an infinite past and to come; secondly, that with higher powers than those of sight and memory we rise above the limits of time and space, and discern truths which are independent of either, and belong, therefore, to a world which we rightly call spiritual and eternal, and are evidence of its reality; thirdly, that mere motes as we are in the boundless universe of matter, yet that we have relationship to it other than that of motes to the earth's mass, and superiority to it all as knowing, and in part understanding, that which cannot know us. These, and there may be other the like, are not doctrines of sects, but facts, ill-stated, probably, by me, and ill-discerned yet by any, but which are well worthy of most reverent attention.

Then we have the Facts of History—that man, as soon as he emerged from rudest savagery, has always recognised his dependence on higher powers, and, growing in culture and knowledge, has not discarded this primitive faith as mere superstition, but exalted and purified it, and adapted it to his higher estate; that religions are many, and yet in some respects all agree; that among them all is one which excels at least in the influence it has had upon the development of the race; that Christianity itself has various and divergent forms, and each its own excellences and defects: that sacred books are common to all the higher religions, and that the Bible holds unique place among them all; that Jesus of Nazareth was believed by the first generation of his followers to have died, and to have risen again and to have appeared to them—this is almost a miscellaneous collection out of innumerable facts of the like kind, which should all be duly estimated before we can arrive at a true estimate of the religious systems which claim our allegiance.

And lastly, there are the Facts of Experience. Placed here in the midst of a world teeming with intellectual life and move-

ment, we are borne in upon by what we hear and see, and learn and feel. The defence is confidently made of this or that faith, that it is a matter not of argument, but of experience; and we have our own inward experience, as have others. But to separate delusion and fact, to discern the true bearings of each problem, to determine what support Salvation Army successes give to Salvation Army doctrine, or the alleged miracles of Notre Dame de Lourdes to the claims of the Roman Church, or the feeling of strength and consolation which comes with prayer to the efficacy of human entreaty on the course of events,—all such problems require, in the first place, impartiality to recognise them fairly, and then patient investigation and study. Under all statements and assurances are Facts, and these we have first to ascertain, and then to discover their meaning.

This is the work which I would venture to indicate to you as that on which you are now occupied professionally as Students of Theology, and in which you ought to occupy yourselves as Ministers of Religion all your lives. Facts are your Creed, your Bible, your divine revelation. To learn, to discover, to investigate, to appreciate them, this your life study. Happy if you shall be able to add to the treasure of human knowledge but one fact, fully ascertained, which may be of use to those who coming after us will, with ampler opportunities, carry on our labours to more successful issues than we can hope in our day to attain.

I was reading lately of the eminent physician who is the great authority on typhoid fever, from which he himself three times suffered, and who, as many others of his noble profession, set an example of devotion which may make many of us ashamed—how "he spent the last ten years of his life busily lecturing, teaching, and preaching under the very sentence of death. He knew it, but worked on unremittingly. He never murmured. He never indulged in one single word which might indicate repining at such a fate. He never by word or deed allowed his own discouragement to dull others—he went straight

on, and died in his chair in the act of seeing a patient. He had such wonderful control over himself, it seemed as though death were nothing to him, but duty just everything." It is so that an old pupil writes of Dr. Murchison, and I could not forbear quoting the words, only that you may esteem the more what follows as to his method. "Facts! facts! facts! was his constant theme, never be guided by another man's statement or opinion." "Do not say the patient had a fit, but that the patient is *said* to have had a fit." "Cross that out, 'he had rheumatic fever,' and write, 'is *said* to have had rheumatic fever' instead." "Doubt everything, believe nothing but what you can prove or verify." "The difficulty is not in arriving at a diagnosis, but in getting out the *facts* of the case; the diagnosis follows as a matter of course."

This advice, intended for Students of medicine preparing themselves for the noble profession of the cure of the human body, advice not for their Student days only, but for their guidance in the business of life, may well be laid to heart by those who are studying for or engaged in the cure of souls. Nor need you fear, that, in the latter case, such a method will lead to scepticism, although in the former it may be the way to the discovery of truth and to successful practice. If Theology is based on a reality, if our religion has a foundation in fact, if they are not mere sentiment and theory, then can they only gain by the test of honest, earnest doubt which prompts to investigation of every assertion, and the examination of every argument, till conviction is obtained—one's own, and not another man's.

"Do not say he had, but is said to have had;" how much more necessary is the caution for those whose interests, both spiritual and temporal, are so closely associated with their judgments on disputed points of history and of doctrine? Assert no more than you know to be fact; what you think, state as probable, or appearing certain to yourself. It is an impertinence to call "fact" that which able, earnest, competent men deny, often to

their own great loss, both in popularity and position. Say that you are convinced in your own mind that such is the case; say that Christians in general are agreed in asserting it; that the arguments for it are such as have been approved by men of loftiest and keenest intellect—you are within your right; but not say, "It is so," unless it is generally acknowledged by all who know.

"The difficulty is getting out the facts" in Theology, even more than in medicine; but it is a difficulty which, in both cases, is being overcome as we rid ourselves of the prejudices of the past, which imposed upon our acceptance myths and superstitions and theories, and compelled us to take them as the unimpeachable data of our investigations.

If we could but once determine these three, the facts of our Position, I, and the universe, and the relation of one to the other; the facts of religious History, and especially of primitive Christianity; and the facts of religious Experience, we should have established Theology in its right place as a science; and queen of sciences, inasmuch as its subject is so much the nobler than that of other sciences.

And each and all of us may help to this work, to determine a date, to trace a quotation, to make sure of a word's meaning; these are humble, but not useless, contributions to theological science, and will make your own lives interesting and happier.

One word more. Do not deceive yourselves thinking that such interests are very well for your Student days, but that in your future work as Ministers matters at once graver and more practical must occupy you. As well might the medical Student look forward to forgetting his anatomy and philosophy, and foregoing all research, when he once became a practitioner.

You will certainly not make a display in the pulpit of your acquirements in Greek or Hebrew, in Philosophy or the Fathers, but you will fall back continually on what you have learnt here; and if you would satisfy the requirements of an intelligent

audience, and give effective help to earnest inquirers, if you would win their confidence and help them to solve their doubts, you must know far more than you have need to tell; you must feel yourself the certainties of fact, or, where none such are yet to be had, then what is second best, the uncertainties of probabilities as yet not ascertained for truth.

"The difficulty," and therefore the duty, "is to get at the facts;" when we have succeeded in doing so, "the diagnosis follows as a matter of course," in Theology as in medicine—for sick and troubled souls as for sick and ailing bodies. The problem of the world is not insoluble; God is not unknowable; Christ is not a dim myth, whose substance has gone beyond recovery; religion is not a mere fancy and prejudice—so we assert. Let our life work be to prove it so—to get at the facts!

A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

To Students leaving the College, June, 1891,

By the Rev. JAMES DRUMMOND, M.A., LL.D.

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE.

The Apostle Paul tells us that knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. Are we, then, through these long laborious years of study, laying up not only treasures of learning but stores of conceit, and forming ourselves into a sort of intellectual oligarchy, with an oligarchy's narrowness and pride and contempt? If so, would it not be better for us to remain in ignorance, and, instead of trying to rise above our fellows, feel the sympathetic warmth of our common humanity glowing in our hearts? Happily these are not necessary alternatives. St. Paul himself does not intend to depreciate knowledge, for he was the most zealous propagator of that very knowledge of which he seems to speak so slightingly; but he saw the danger of an excessive devotion to it, and the necessity of supplementing and guiding it by the more spiritual forces of our nature. We can hardly hope to be exempt from that danger in a University which exists for the purposes of learning, and in a College which endeavours to bring the keenest instruments of modern research to bear on the most sacred problems. Whether we in any degree succumb to this danger depends on the spirit in which we study; but that the danger exists can hardly be denied.

The moral energy of our nature may be weakened, through simple inanition, by making knowledge too exclusively the object of pursuit. Not only the fascination of intellectual culture, but

the honourable competitions of a student's career, may so engross the attention that the higher elements of character will retreat into the background, and our natural ambition and self-assertiveness remain without adequate check. The fine graces of a beautiful disposition cannot, any more than knowledge, be acquired without time and care; and he who in his anxiety to *know*, and to adjust the relations of thought, forgets that he must learn to feel and act, and cherish purity and harmony of feeling and conduct, is missing his supreme end, and sacrificing the higher to the lower. This is a temptation to which the student is constantly exposed; and if we would not subordinate moral power to intellectual distinction, we must faithfully reserve seasons of holy rest from our more absorbing and exciting pursuits, and dedicate these tranquil hours to reflection and communion with God.

If we are not carried to the higher levels of character by the inspirations which come to us at such times, knowledge is apt to puff up by creating a sense of superiority. It places a man, to a certain extent, above his fellows; and if he is brought largely into association with those who have not had the same advantages as himself, his vanity is secretly flattered, and he thinks of himself as one who stands above the common crowd. But the kind of knowledge to which the Apostle particularly alludes is that which detaches a man from current opinions, which he has learnt to regard as false or superstitious. How foolish, he thinks, it is of other men to fix their faith on such transparent absurdities; he has passed beyond these puerile notions, and belongs to the enlightened few. It is here that our danger chiefly lies. We are driven, whether by the defect of our intelligence, or by the excellence of our method, to reject many things which others regard as sacred truths; and we are tempted to take credit to ourselves for being superior to vulgar prejudice, and to speak with a wounding contempt of beliefs or practices which we think we have outgrown.

Thus intellectual conviction, not unmixed with intellectual pride, drives out our love; and, while we imagine that we see so sharply the forms and relations of thought, we are becoming blind to that Spirit which constitutes the very essence of God, and is the only permanent ground of human brotherhood.

But, after all, it is not knowledge that is in fault, but our egotism which takes advantage of knowledge, and uses it as a prop to support its own unfounded claims; for knowledge, in a healthy nature, ought to foster humility; and the student who seeks it with the pure love of a devotee, and not for self-aggrandisement, will secure, by its means, a richer store of self-forgetting goodness.

Knowledge brings us into the presence of an infinite that is knowable; indeed, we may say, of an indefinite magnitude that is actually known, though not to us. The territory of the known is continually enlarging, and spreading in all directions far beyond the limits of any single human intelligence. It is necessary, if we would do any fruitful work, to take up some special department of study, and give our energies chiefly to that, while all around us are men deeply versed each in his own particular subject, with which we ourselves possess only a rudimentary acquaintance. Thus knowledge teaches us our ignorance, and brings before us in dim immensity the conquered realms of science which we, individually, have never been able to explore. And beyond these stretches on every side the infinite unknown, offering endless treasure to the hand of toiling genius, and making all present attainments insignificant in comparison with those that are yet to be won. In presence of this majesty of universal truth, the mind is humbled; and when knowledge compares itself, not with the ignorance beneath it, but with the omniscience above it, it no longer puffs up, but bows us down in reverence before Him of whose ways we have seen so small a part, and yet enough to fill us with awe and adoration.

But whatever department of study we may select, there is surely enough even in that department to give to the genuine student a humbling sense of his inability to do full justice to so large a subject. He becomes more and more familiar with the inherent difficulties of research, the extent of knowledge required in order to secure all the available evidence, the complexity and uncertainty of the evidence when it is collected. This is, perhaps, particularly the case in studies such as we pursue at this College, into which probabilities so largely enter. We find that criticism is not a short and easy road to truth, but is an instrument which requires carefully trained moral and intellectual faculties, if it is not to lead us completely astray; and I often think that the great benefit to be derived from the minute, and in themselves dry, critical investigations which we are obliged to conduct is a moral benefit, and consists only in a secondary degree in the results at which we arrive. If we are at all able to illustrate and impress upon your minds the caution and care and minute conscientious labour which are necessary for him whose only anxiety is to ascertain the truth, we shall do more for you than if we dazzled your imagination with brilliant pictures, or flourished before your eyes what we ourselves believed to be the results of modern research.

Again, it is impossible for us to pursue any investigation sincerely without becoming aware of deep-seated deficiencies in ourselves. In following out the history of thought, we perceive how largely personal characteristics affect the formation of opinion, and we cannot but reflect that we, too, must have our bias, which makes it difficult for us to see evidence exactly as it is. We are misled both by the one-sided tendencies of our natural constitution, and by the prejudices which we owe to inheritance or to education. Perfect candour is a rare quality, to be learned only in the school of conscience, and made strong through constant discipline. Candour brings with it self-knowledge, and self-knowledge discloses to us the limitation and

uncertainty of our individual judgment. The greatness of the truth and the imperfection of our private instrument of research present themselves in startling contrast, and forbid any overweening estimate of our own powers. Yet this humbling knowledge of ourselves helps us to repair our deficiencies, and to guard against every misleading bias; and, when our humility is perfect, we shall see truth as it is, so far, at least, as our limited nature is permitted to behold it, no longer distorted and coloured by the refracting media of our egotism. Thus the pursuit of knowledge, passing into the worship of truth, is at once humbling and ennobling. The spirit of child-like simplicity shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted to the blessed vision, and speak face to face with the angels of truth, those words of God that make their home in the hearts of the lowly. If our mental discipline has been wisely governed, and has kept the mind clear of selfish claims, our reason will become at last a passionless instrument of truth, responsive to the universal Reason, yet not cut off from the domain of high emotion, but led by aspiration, and followed by wonder, worship, and love.

Love, when we have attained it, can only edify; for it cannot, like knowledge, be pressed into the service of egotism, whose natural foe it is. It edifies ourselves, and builds up the solid structure of character, that will stand amid the storms of life. For love takes from us our selfish cares and ambition and vanity, which, though they may impart a kind of swollen grandeur, leave us weak and ready to fall, not only under the stress of serious trial, but before slights and mortifications which make a breach in our self-esteem. Love brings us into communion with the Eternal Righteousness, and thus endows even minds that are not otherwise remarkable with a sweet dignity and elevation of character, so that they seem to bring the air of heaven where they go. And hence love edifies others as well as ourselves. Not only does it diffuse its gracious influence through a thousand unnoticed

words and deeds, but it wins victories for truth by subduing enmities, and attracting men into that calm and gentle thoughtfulness without which discussion is of so little use. How often do cleverness and sarcasm, while they flatter our sense of power, repel those whom it is our business to convince, and leave a silenced antagonist more antagonistic than before; but love represses the smart argument and wounding retort, finds out, through the searching look of sympathy, what is deep and strong in the convictions of an opponent, and, by unaffected consideration for his feelings, by impartial and courteous reasonableness, disarms his enmity, and lures him to the side of truth. Or if, as is probable, the truth of God will always present itself in varying aspects to our imperfect intelligence, then, through the constraint of love, we shall come to see that the spirit of truth may dwell with those who cannot repeat our formulæ, and that greater than all is this revealing love itself, which draws men up to God, and unites them to one another as his children. Be it ours, then, to speak the truth in love.

You, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Brettell, have proved your love of knowledge by your zealous devotion to your studies through so many years, and by your determination to prolong them for a yet further period, so that you may be as completely as possible equipped for your life's work. But you have never lost sight of the spiritual relations of knowledge, or acquired it in that one-sided and imperfect way which makes it an enemy of character. You have sought to make knowledge and love mutually complementary; and I trust that, in your future career, you will not forget that religious emotion and intellectual energy must co-operate in producing the highest work. The former must be chastened and guided by the clear vision of the latter; the latter must be consecrated by humble devotion to Him who alone is without error, and by a love which seeks no personal victory, but would draw men with unobtrusive helpfulness from falsity and sin. With your different gifts, we look forward to equal

faithfulness in your work, and we earnestly hope and pray that your labours will be richly blessed in building up whatever Church is committed to your charge.

In now bidding you farewell, we cannot but remember that you are the last of our theological students who have been with us in London, and, in parting with you, we bring to a close a long episode in the history of our College, and finally sever the old associations, associations which are very dear and sacred to many among us. And so you occupy the borderland between the old and the new, and will help to preserve among us the spirit of the ancient traditions, while you turn your faces to the future, and seek for the highest culture amid changed surroundings. And it will be no light thing if you are able to preserve, amid the advancing thought of the coming time, our inherited watch-words of Reverence and Freedom, and manifest to a new generation the harmony of knowledge and love. In the name of the College, I bid you a cordial farewell.

A WELCOME TO THE MINISTRY,

By the Rev. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

THE time has past by in which we can talk of the years in which we live as years of transition in religion, except in the wide sense that ideas and their forms are always passing on. We are on the verge of a new world of thought and feeling in almost every sphere of human endeavour. That new world has not, as yet, especially in religion and social philosophy, taken its clear shape; but at any moment, on the lips of some man of genius, it may begin to know itself and to know its aims, and then to run swiftly forward on its path. Art is at that point, so is creative Literature; so are Social and Political questions, so are Science and Criticism, and so, above all, are Religion and the Science of Religion. I should be glad if I had time in a lecture to tell the tale of these last thirty years—it is strange how these periods have of late arranged themselves in thirties,—but we meet to-night on the field of Religion and of that religious world into which you, whom I welcome to the Ministry of Christ, are about to enter, no longer as learners, but as soldiers who begin their campaign. And to the religious matter I confine myself. Christianity, which is our religious matter in this place, has, generation after generation, with all the prolific power which belongs to a vital root, taken new shapes in the minds of men. The main shapes it has taken during the last sixty years, and especially during the last thirty, are now exhausted of all the good they contained. What harvest they had—and it was a very fair harvest—has been gathered in for the use of men, and the field is now in stubble; nay rather, it has been ploughed and

sown, and we wait for the new earing. The nonsense that is talked about Christianity being dead, arises from those who mistake the decay of old intellectual forms of it for the death of the living thing itself. We are at that point of one of those cycles of life in which the bird is dying, but its egg remains. The eagle has all but gone, but a new eagle will be born. You may as well try to kill Science as Christianity. A living spirit that lives by love in man can no more perish than love itself can perish. All decay in it only produces fresher life. "Still more labyrinthine buds its rose." We stand upon the verge of this new life, and it is not vain to say for ourselves that we, whom this College represents, stand nearest to it, that the best approach to its new forms has been made by us, and that if we could but add to our clearer conceptions of the new Christianity, more of the passion and love which have always characterised the growth of all new forms of Christianity, we should be certain to lead the van. But whether we lead or not does not make much matter. What we have to do is to be alert and ready, accinct for the race, looking out for the call of God and for the fresher light of his countenance, as quick to follow a true leader as we should be to lead, if such a duty were laid upon us, caring nothing for our own repute, but only for the victory of right and love and truth, and rejoicing if we are counted worthy of fighting the good fight of faith. As for you who are at this time entering upon the battle, I congratulate you on the period at which you are beginning. I have myself lived through the birth, the growth, and now through the decay of a world of thought about Christianity which once was new, but now is all but dead. To you, a new world is opening—its dawn is already in the sky; the leaves are beginning to shoot upon the trees of this fresh springtide. For you who are young and ought to be keen, it ought to be a great joy and a great impulse. Ought you not to feel inspired? Yes, the welcome into the Ministry which we give you to-night has more in it—owing to the time—than it can have had for many years.

One of the elements of the new world of which I speak is the attempt, nay, the determination, to create a new society, and to get rid of the root evils of the old. That will be one of the great campaigns of the next thirty years. Around it gathers, as you must have felt, the main enthusiasm of those who love, all the nobler passions of men and women who believe in their oneness with humanity, and their childhood to God the Father. Its eagerness and its aims are not confined to one nation. It is among progressive peoples a universal movement. Its keenness and excitement are astonishing, its march rapid, its hopes and faith ideal, and its methods practical, even scientific. It is this union of the imaginative and the scientific which gives it a force which will overbear resistance. It belongs to no special class. Of course, the poorer classes who have suffered the most feel its hopes most keenly, but a great and increasing mass of persons in the comfortable classes are eagerly touched by its spirit, and are ready, in the emotion of it, to make large sacrifices for it. And, indeed, in its largest aim, it desires not only to regenerate the position of the poor, but just as much to regenerate the spirit of those who are called the upper classes of society. Its chief aim is justice all round, and in the best of those who pursue that aim it desires that love, in all the forms St. Paul gives it in his noble Psalm of Charity, should do the work hand-in-hand with justice. Moreover, a new element pervades it, or, at least, pervades the best of those who aspire to it—the element of gentleness. Science has taught it that its advance ought to be slow; historical experience has taught it that the use of force to attain its ends cuts its throat or brings back swiftly all the evils it strives to overthrow, and both science and historical experience are at this point in harmony with the spirit of Christianity. There is more hope of success than ever there was before, and the hope has increased at every point the eagerness, the thrilling of new life, the animation as of birds in spring, which fills the movement. It is like that which was said of the prophet Joel, "Behold the

days come, saith the Lord, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and the old men shall see visions and the young men dream dreams, and on my servants and handmaids I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall speak like prophets." Can any words be closer to that new life, new hopes, new aims which now are filling the world, and of which the multitude of Utopias which are published is but one of the symptoms ?

Into this great movement you will come, and you will not be able to stand apart from it. It has a hundred forms, and is quite as quick and powerful in art and literature and law as it is in politics and sociology. It has seized also on religion—on Christianity, to which it has the closest relation. How will you bear yourselves within it ?

Well, first, you should welcome it with joy—as I welcome you into a share in it. It has an ideal aim such as a Christian ought to have. It desires a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Unrighteous methods are put forward for its realisation by some who hate the ideal element in it, and desire only the material. Part of your work will be to maintain it within the limits of strict righteousness, having faith that righteousness is at the root of the law of universal development, and that to violate that fundamental power is to lose all force. That duty of yours is, in this struggle, to fight the good fight of faith.

Again, the movement will produce itself before you in two shapes. One will say, "Better men's circumstances, and a new spirit will begin to influence and better their lives." Another will say, "Awaken in men a new and nobler spirit, train their soul, and then their circumstances will improve." Both these statements are true when they are taken together. To maintain one against the other is to maintain one half of a truth against the other half of it. No man, in the Christian ministry, can justly neglect giving his energy to the bettering of the social,

physical, and educational condition of the poor and diseased and criminal. But he is not a Christian minister, nor is his work truly ministerial if that is all he does. Social improvement is a work which anyone can do, which all ought to do; but you are set apart (as much as a lawyer or a physician) for a special work, and while you join in the universal movement towards a juster society, it is your special business to give a spiritual life to that movement, to keep it at an ideal level, to free it from mere materialism, to maintain in it the monarchy of self-sacrifice, to fix its eyes on invisible and unworldly truths, to supply it with noble and spiritual faiths, to base all associations of men on the ground of their spiritual union—all being alike children of God, and brothers of one another in the love and faith by which Jesus lived—to maintain the dignity of this spiritual communion of men in an immortal union with God. This is the fight of faith you will, as ministers of God, have to wage; and this not only binds you up with the poor, but with the rich, not only with the ignorant but the learned, for on these grounds all men are seen as stripped of everything save of their humanity and their divine kinship. Nay, at the very end, as one argues back to a simpler and simpler expression, nothing remains but God in Man and Man in God; that central truth which, as long as it was conceived to be formalised in Jesus Christ alone, was of as limited a use to men, and of as limited a power over them, as it will be of illimitable use and power when it is conceived as the mother and universal truth; God and all the spirits which have flown from him, are for ever one. To support this inwoven life of the divine and the human, is, above all things else, your duty and work. This is the goal which all, in every class, are called upon to reach, to secure, and to enjoy. Improve, then, the material condition and the knowledge of all who are struggling for justice; it is part of your life which, if you neglect, you are out of touch with the new life; but kindle in it, uphold and sanctify for all, the life which is divine, the communion with man of

God, without whose education all effort for social improvement will revert to new miseries and new despair. So far for that matter.

The next thing to speak of is a tendency in the world, which is the very opposite of that of which we have spoken, but which is equally characteristic of a time when a new life and spirit is on the verge of taking its form. As part of the fight of faith is to support and direct the first, so part of that battle is to weaken and oppose the doctrine that the world is going from bad to worse, that there is no regeneration for it, and that there ought to be none. This pessimism, as it has been called, is a favourite doctrine of the comfortable classes who are idle and luxurious, or merely fantastic, and who are profoundly ignorant of the working world and of the poor. The sufferings of the poor and the oppressed are used as an argument in its favour, but, curiously enough, you scarcely ever find it held by the poor and the oppressed ;—on the contrary, there are the creators and builders of Utopias ; out of this class grow those who prophesy a golden year. Those who have most reason to despair never despair.

But this philosophy of the worst belongs to those who suffer only from their extravagance and luxury and idleness, or from a philosophic retirement from the battle of mankind, or from an over-refined culture, or, as in the Universities, from youthful playing with these theories as toys of the mind. This has always been a doctrine which appears in times when the life of a class or a nation is in decay, and it is as characteristic of such decay as the previous doctrine I have described is characteristic of the labour pains of the coming life. It has always belonged to the breaking up of an exhausted period, and it has almost always appeared among the upper classes who are luxurious, and the cultivated folk who hang on their outskirts, and who detest the rudeness and simplicity of the new conceptions. It was so in the later Roman Empire. It was so before the French Revolution ; it was so in the time of Jesus. It is so among a

certain class at present; and one of its most marked characteristics is the contempt of those who hold it for those who do not go with them, a contempt which proves their incapacity to act, and the dotage of their thought. However, we need not be too angry with them. The Goths are coming on them, and we need the Goths, if Philosophy, Art, Literature, or Religion are to continue. Pessimism ends by slaughtering these noble things, for it imprisons thought and effort; it puts a stop to all work to redeem the weak and criminal world; it mocks at, and degrades love. "Men are too bad," they say, "too base, too naturally selfish to keep alive or to improve. They are in decay and corruption—let them perish. It is the best thing which can happen to them."

Nevertheless, a degrading doctrine like that is best met, not by incessant attack of it, but by building up living interests which will kindle men, by awaking noble passions among men, by glorifying by our life and work the great duties and the great aspirations of mankind, by forming in thought and shaping by imagination vital and beautiful ideals, and by sacrificing our lives, in a pure, clear flame, upon their altars; by expanding and developing the aims and the work of humanity, and by believing in God, the Father of men, and living like His children. Faith in man and faith in God, faith in the glorious end to which the vast struggles of the Titan works, and in the victory in which it is to close, will enable you to fight the good fight against the doctrine of those poor and diseased folk, who maintain, at the very moment when the bright child of a new age is about to be born, that universal death is the most fitting end of the evolution of man. I welcome you to this battle. Fight it well, with the sword of the Spirit, with the shield of Faith upon your breast, and the joyful hope of salvation shining on your head.

This is the main statement of the battle to which we welcome you to-night, and of the conditions under which it will be waged, reduced to their simplest expression, or to one of their simplest

expressions. I should like to hang on to it two codicils, if I may be allowed to use that term, one with regard to knowledge and another with regard to beauty.

Knowledge is necessary for the faith you have to defend, the faith in God and Man. The best knowledge is one which, if you are human persons, you will gain day by day in your work, the knowledge of the human heart, and there is only one way of gaining it, and that is by loving men and women well. The labour for that knowledge I recommend to you, and you must take care lest the winning of other knowledge hide from you, or prevent you from striving after, this knowledge, the most important you can secure.

But that is not what we generally understand by knowledge. To winning all that you require of what others have thought and done you have devoted for some time your lives, and no better work could be done. It is absolutely necessary. The question now is, what are you going to do with it? and I can put briefly what I mean. There are two ways in which we may chiefly use knowledge. The first is for criticism, and it has its use and excellence. But the over-development of it at the present day is a mark of that decay of life which belongs to a part of our society. It goes along with an exhausted world. Use knowledge then for criticism, but not altogether; nor even chiefly. Too much use of it, for that purpose, leads to pride and vanity; and in the end, to the decay of intelligence, and the uses of intelligence.

The true use of knowledge, and that use of it which belongs to a living and larger world, such as is now on the point of birth, is for creation. Your main work is to shape your knowledge within yourself into new and vital forms, and issue it, new-minted, for the use and joy of men, suffused with spiritual thought, bright with imagination, and aflame with new interests which will kindle men into a fresher life. Leave, for the most part, criticism alone, and give yourself to some creation; and, just as criticism alone ministers to pride and then to death, so

creation, even of the smallest kind, ministers to humility, for it at once opens before you an ever expanding sea; and ministers to life, for to make a new and individual thing kindles in you the sense of life and awakes the desire of it in others. This will be to belong to the new period of life and thought and feeling, which is being even now born into the world.

And what, out of your knowledge, you create, shape as beautifully as you can. Give it charm, that quality which will make men desire it, and follow after it with love. More than half your true success—by which I mean your influence on mankind for good and progress—will depend on that.

Beauty is far too much neglected. It never belongs to criticism; it ought by right to be always bound up with creation. What it is, is hard to define; but whenever anything in nature or in the thoughts and doings of man awakens noble desire of seeing more of it, kindles pure love of it, seems to open out before us an infinite of it which allures us into an endless pursuit, stimulates reverence, and makes the heart leap with joy—there is beauty, and with it always is imagination, the shaping power.

The capacity for seeing that is one of the first necessities for such a life in a living world as I now urge on you. When you see it, you always see more and more of it. And the more you see it the more love and reverence you will feel in your heart, and the less you will care to criticise, and the more you will care to create. All the world wants it now, and the glory of it, more almost than anything else, for nearly all the world has lost the power of seeing it. All your hearers, if you are to be writers and preachers, need it sorely. The monied men want it; the scientific men want it; the business men want it. The middle class and the aristocracy are almost destitute of it; the working men abide in conditions in which its outward forms are absent. To give them the power to see all that is lovely in nature, in human thought, in art, and in the noble acts of men—that is a great part of your work, and you should realise it and shape it day by day.

Lastly, you are entering on life in a world which, having exhausted one form of Christianity, and not having as yet shaped another fitted for a new age, is full of active unbelief or inactive carelessness concerning the things which belong to the spiritual life; in which either the understanding or the purse is Lord of act and thought, in which the imagination and emotion of the invisible truths of the spirit are kept in prison. Therefore, lay hold of eternal life; on the life which lives on earth for the love of God the Father, for the following and the faith of Jesus, for those truths which are invisible, immaterial, and eternal; and the support and pursuit of which are worth all the wealth and honour, rank and knowledge of the earth; and on these, not only as belonging to your life on earth, lived for the sake of your fellow-men, but as belonging also to a life to come, in which you and your brothers on earth shall partake of God for ever.

It is not much use to argue with, or to attack those who live for the things of this world alone. You will not do much good in that way, but only make a fruitless noise which will set the world more closely to its own pursuits. But you will do good, and fight the good fight of faith, by a personal grasp of this spiritual life, by so deep a conviction of it that your whole life will be its witness, by so great a love of it that all men will feel that this life is the first to you, and inconceivably dear to you—so dear that you can no more join in the view which says "all the world is bad" than you can help joining in the new life, which declares that "the world is passing on to a new and nobler being"—and so uplifting that all your knowledge will become creative and all your creation beautiful. That is the deepest foundation of a minister's life, the very life and voice of all his prophesying. Prophesy it with courage, with faith, with joyful hope, and imaginative joy, before the old and decaying world, that it may forget its exhaustion, and die that it may live. Prophesy it within the new and upspringing life of the world, that it may fulfil the nobler society to which it now aspires.